

TRAVELLER

“SCOUTS OUT” GUIDE

Congratulations on your selection as a Traveller Scout.

A Traveller Scout is a volunteer who assists the Public Affairs Office in writing news articles.

You'll have a chance to develop hidden talents, earn recognition and see your efforts on your organization's behalf appear in the Fort Lee *Traveller*.

As the PAO's eyes and ears in your organization, you'll be able to ensure that what deserves visibility and recognition

will find its way to print rather than go unpublished or unrecognized.

While no one from PAO will be standing over your shoulder, you'll be able to count on the PAO staff for some directions.

Make sure you touch base with the Traveller editor for story topics, ideas and for articles you plan on submitting.

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Traveller Deadline

*is the Thursday at noon
before the requested publication date.*

What is news?

News, simply defined, is information previously unknown. It can be about any subject that may be of interest to Soldiers, civilians, family members, etc. Some examples of subjects to cover are training, human interests, sports, organizational days, reorganization and special programs.

The *Traveller* is interested in stories about your current programs currently receiving command emphasis (*Examples*: civic action projects, ecology, energy conservation, modernization, safety initiatives and programs, etc.). You can also get topics of interest at staff meetings and from others in your organization.

There are some common characteristics of news, known as “news values.” The more of these news values an article has, the more newsworthy it is.

News values include:

Timeliness – information that happened recently and should be printed without delay. Since the *Traveller* is published weekly, we need events that happened the current or previous week.

Proximity – information has proximity if it happened nearby, such as on-post.

Impact, relevance – the information directly affects your audience.

Progress – information has this element if it details changes in the way the military or your organization is doing things.

Suspense – information that will keep the reader wondering what’s going to happen next.

Prominence – involves information on a person or organization all readers may be interested in.

What will you have to do?

Write a 300 to 500 word article on things that are happening with your organization and it’s people.

If applicable, take a few photos and write outlines identifying who and what is in the picture.

Getting Started

Pick a topic or event that is happening in your organization. The main thing to keep in mind when writing a story is to answer the five Ws and H: Who, What, When, Where, Why and How.

When those questions have been answered completely and accurately, you have a story. Once you get this “scoop” on a story, coordinate with the *Traveller* editor.

Fill out a *Traveller* request form and send it to editor@lee.army.mil – Let the editor know you would like to submit an article, the topic of the article, and when you anticipate submitting it. This helps to avoid a duplication of efforts.

Set up a deadline for when the article is due with the *Traveller* editor.

News gathering techniques:

Recognizing and identifying what the topic of your news article will be about is one thing; finding information to put the story together is something else.

If research is needed, do it.

You may also need to talk with others to get information for your article. People you interview are your sources. Figure out who can answer and elaborate on the five Ws and H.

Interviewing techniques

Plan questions to ask before conducting interviews with your sources. Think of questions readers may want to know about if they had the chance to talk to this person. Write the questions down and take them with you when doing an interview.

Many of your sources for interviews may include your directors, project managers and other subject matter experts within your organization. You can get information by talking with individuals from various sections in your offices and organizations.

Let the people you work with know that you are writing an article for the *Traveller* and what information you need in order to write your story.

During an interview, take notes to fit your own style. You may want to use a tape recorder.

After an interview, transcribe your notes into longhand or on the computer and fill in the gaps as soon as possible. If you have further questions contact your sources as soon as possible for clarification.

Writing the story

You've done the research, interviewed your sources and taken notes. Now it's time to write your news article.

A typical news story begins with a lead. A lead is a sentence that answers several of the six basic questions (who, what when, where, why and how). The rest of the story provides elaborating on details of the five Ws and H beyond this first paragraph.

Bridge — After writing your lead, you should have a one-sentence transitional or “bridge” paragraph to ease the reader into the body of your story.

The bridge serves several purposes. It can introduce any of the other five Ws and H not covered in the lead.

Body — after the bridge of the story, is the body of the story. In the body, you expand upon the material covered in the lead and the bridge by giving additional details about the story.

How you organize this material is subjective. There is no hard and fast rule for determining which facts are least important. Probably the best thing you can do is put yourself in the reader's position and ask yourself which facts are the most interesting.

Use the inverted pyramid style of writing – the most important facts should go into the first paragraph, with the story's details following in descending order of importance, and culminating the least important facts at the end of the story.

This way the reader can get at the “meat” of the story, even if he or she reads it only part way through. Also, if the editor doesn't have space to run the entire story, it can be trimmed from the bottom without losing any of the important elements.



The ABCs of Journalism

Success in news writing comes from keeping stories tight and simple. As you write, keep in mind the ABCs of journalism: Accuracy, Brevity and Clarity.

Be accurate — Your writing efforts won't get into print if the editor can't depend on the factual content. Always double-check your facts, including the spelling of all names, statistical information, dates, times and places. Be sure they are correct.

Be brief — Keep your sentences short and limit your paragraphs to two or three sentences.

Be clear — Avoid wordiness, repetition or incorporating unrelated ideas in paragraphs.

The average education level of a newspaper reader is the eighth grade. Don't use elaborate words that the average reader would not understand.

Other tips for writing your news article:

- Always identify your sources or any persons mentioned in the article — use first and last name, rank for military, title, and the organization the person is from.

- Spell out acronyms on first reference. Say Noncommissioned Officer the first time you use the word. You can use “NCO” after that.

- Avoid “first person” accounts. Write in the third person.

- Avoid using jargon. Jargon refers to specialized terms or phrases not commonly understood by the general public. If jargon is used in a direct quote or if it is necessary to help tell the story, explain what the term means.

- If appropriate, include quotes. Quotes add creditability to the article.

(*Example:* If the article is about a company's trip to Washington D.C., include quotes from the Soldiers about what they enjoyed about the trip or what they learned).

- Do not quote yourself.

- At the top of the first page, list the author's name, title, organization, and a reachable phone number. If more than one person wrote the article, dual credit may be given. If preferred, credit may be attributed to an entire unit or agency.

(*Example:* “Submitted by 266th Quartermaster Battalion, 23rd QM Brigade” or “Submitted by the Fort Lee Safety Office”).

Things to avoid

- Your personal opinions
- Politics
- Restricted information (can't publish information that is labeled as secret or would breach installation or Army security).

After writing the first draft

- Check for jargon and ensure acronyms are spelled out in the first reference.
- Check for the ABCs of Journalism
- Check spelling and grammar
- Check verb tenses
- Get a coworker to review and edit.
- Have your director review and approve for submission to the Traveller

It is the writer's responsibility to verify the accuracy of all stories. Incomplete information may delay publication.

Photos

Photos will bring your story to life. The *Traveller* editor is always looking for photographs full of action and interest, pictures that will capture the reader's attention.

Tips on taking good photographs:

- Use a digital camera.
- Save the photo as a JPG file. Images for publication need to be shot at a minimum of 1600 x 1200 pixels per inch or 300 dpi.
- Never alter an image using digital editing software.
- Check for safety, policy and propriety violations.
 - Safety* – check for hard hats, gloves, safety glasses, boots.
 - Policy* – official Army publications cannot provide commercial endorsement of any product. Nor can they portray our employees smoking, drinking or gambling.
 - Propriety* – “the state of proper being.” Look for things that could cause embarrassment to your subject – a shirt unbuttoned too far or a zipper forgotten after a trip to the bathroom.
- Fill the camera frame with the subject. Get in close.
- Avoid putting too many people in one shot, and make sure the subject is in focus.
- Watch for objects in the background that may be distracting. If someone will look like they have a flagpole

growing out of their head, move the camera to one side or the other.

- Avoid “grip and grins” — One person handling something to another one while shaking hands and both are staring at the camera. Instead get the subject doing his or her job. The best photos are those that show action.



Cutlines

A photo cutline is the caption that goes with the photo. Cutlines have four major functions: they briefly explain the action, identify the subjects, provide background information and give credit to the photographer.

Keep the five Ws and H in mind when writing cutlines.

When identifying the person you will need to identify them by full name, title or rank and unit or organization the same way you do in your article.

Sending it to the Traveller

Submit the article in an electronic format (Word document) by e-mail to editor@lee.army.mil or on a computer disk with a printed copy.

If sending photos through e-mail, send them as a separate attachment. Do not include photos in a Word document or Power Point slide.

Photo cutlines can be sent inside the body of the e-mail or in a Word document. Make sure to include the author's name, title, organization and a reachable phone number.

If you don't get a return verifying receipt within a day, call (804) 734-7147 to verify it has been received.

Meet the newspaper's deadline. The deadline is **Thursday, noon** before the requested publication print date. Stories submitted late will be held for use at the editor's discretion as deemed appropriate.

If you have any questions about submitting articles call the editor at (804) 734-7147, or e-mail editor@lee.army.mil.

